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A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States. By ROBERT ELLIS THOMPSON, D.D. ["American Church History" Series.] (New York: The Christian Literature Co. 1895. Pp. xxxi, 424.)

THE REV. Robert Ellis Thompson, D.D., of Philadelphia, was selected by the Editorial Committee of the American Society of Church History, to write the history of the Presbyterian churches in the United States, for the series on "American Church History" which the Society planned, in the confidence that he could be trusted to present the facts in an impartial, scholarly, and interesting way. This confidence he has in the main justified.

The book opens with an excellent bibliography of fully 20 pages, distributed under periods. Similar bibliographies are given in each volume of the series, and constitute one of its most useful features. Then comes a single chapter on the historic antecedents, in the Old World, of the Presbyterian churches of the United States. To Calvin and John à Lasco Presbyterian polity is properly traced. From them it became the polity of the Reformed churches of the continent, and of the Scottish Church. But American Presbyterianism is really derived from Ulster, whither Scottish Presbyterians had emigrated in large numbers, in the early part of the seventeenth century, and whence they were driven to this country by prelatical oppression and troublesome landlords. The founder of American Presbyterianism is the Rev. Francis Makemie, who landed in 1683, and in Philadelphia was moderator of the first presbytery in 1705. Immigration from Ulster to America began in the closing decades of the seventeenth century, and set in on a great scale in the eighteenth century. As there were several species of Presbyterianism in the old country, it is not to be wondered at that the imported at once showed these varieties. Presbyterians were fond of argumentation upon small points, and so they divided among themselves on the old lines, and later on new ones. To-day, although much consolidation has taken place, and there has been a marked falling off of polemical zeal, there are still four distinct varieties of Presbyterianism among us, viz. the Presbyterian Church, *par excellence*, North and South, the Cumberland Presbyterians, the United Presbyterians, and the Reformed Presbyterians. They stand in this order in influence, numbers, wealth, and prospects, and there are few signs that these bodies will unite. Dr. Thompson tells the story of the growth of these species, giving much the larger space, properly, to the great Presbyterian Church, North and South. But in trying to follow several lines of development, he occasionally gets the skeins a little tangled and the reader's attention is distracted.

How modern the book is, is seen by the chapters on the Briggs and Smith cases, and that on the proposed Theological Seminary control. Probably many will turn to see what the author has to say upon the Briggs matter, and some will be surprised at his strictures upon the General

Assembly's decision. He frees his mind in fine style, and, perhaps, goes too far in his remarks. "This decision," he says (p. 269), "lacks the calm of the judicial temper. It is pervaded by a personal animus, which finds an outlet in many of its phrases, and especially in the conversion of the charge of unsound teaching into one of personal immorality, and in making the restoration of the offender dependent not upon the retraction of his alleged errors, but upon his 'repentance' for his sin. It thus affixes a stigma to the accused, which was not warranted by any evidence before the Assembly, nor embodied in any of the charges on which he was tried." Another chapter full of frank criticism is on Presbyterian theological and literary life since 1870. He scatters praise and condemnation with a free hand upon the writers and teachers of the Church, mentioning the living as well as the dead.

Dr. Thompson found the 450 pages allowed by the publisher for the volume all too many, and used only 316. He thus had space for an appendix of 100 pages of the most important documents "illustrative of the history of the Presbyterian Church in America." As this list is itself an epitome of Presbyterian history, and as nowhere else can the student find these documents all brought together in so convenient a form, his list will be here given entire: 1. The Scottish National Covenant of 1581; 2. The Solemn League and Covenant, 1643; 3. The Adopting Acts of 1647; 4. The Adopting Act of the Synod of Philadelphia, 1729; 5. The Synod of Philadelphia's Explanatory Act of 1736; 6. The Protestation of 1741, which occasioned the division of the Synod of Philadelphia; 7. The Plan of Union of 1758; 8. The Basis of Union of 1782, on which the Associate Reformed Church was founded; 9. The Adopting Acts of 1788; 10. The Declaration of Principles of 1788; 11. The Terms of Subscription required of Candidates for Ordination in the Presbyterian Church since 1788; 12. The Plan of Union of 1801; 13. The Excising Acts of 1837; 14. The Auburn Declaration of 1837; 15. Deliverances on Slavery [in the various Presbyterian churches]; 16. Doctrinal Basis of the Union of 1858, forming the United Presbyterian Church; 17. Adopting Act of the Union of 1858; 18. The Action of the Old School Assembly on Loyalty, in 1861; 19. Address of the Southern General Assembly to all the Churches of Jesus Christ, adopted 1861 [one of the most remarkable papers in American history, and which should by all means be read by every Northern man]; 20. Doctrinal Basis of Union of the United Synod of the South (N.S.) with the Southern Presbyterian Church (O.S.), 1864; 21. The Doctrinal Basis of the Reunion of the Old and the New School Churches in 1869; 22. The Concurrent Declarations of 1869; 23. The Charges upon which Dr. Briggs was tried, and the Sentence pronounced by the General Assembly, 1893; 24. Proposed Plan for the Federation of the Reformed Churches of America, 1894.

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